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## THE UNITARIAN NAME.

IN adopting the title "Unitarian Review" we have gone counter to the advice of some whose judgment we so much respect, that we feel called upon to give an explanation of our reasons for taking this, rather than some one of the attractive titles which have been variously suggested to us, by those who have taken an interest in the arrangements for this Review.

The primary reason is that this name most simply expresses its purpose and the place we intend it shall occupy. We hope to make it representative of the thought and life of the Unitarian branch of the Christian Church. In the multiplicity of excellent periodicals, among which are several that are thoroughly liberal, both in spirit and in culture, we should hesitate in assuming the right of this journal to exist, if it were not that here is a place which no other attempts to fill, and in which we believe there is important work to do. But this general consideration, however satisfactory it might have seemed in first adopting the title, leaves still unanswered certain serious objections which have been urged against it and which deserve a reply. The first is that "this name," it is said, "will prevent any wide circulation outside our own particular denomination."

In answer to this we would say, —

I. Supposing this assumption to be true, the laudable desire which is the basis of this objection is perhaps already sufficiently provided for. Our leading Unitarian writers are now welcomed as regular contributors to the Secular periodicals which have the widest circulation — and even to the most popular and influential religious journals of other denominations. Besides this, "Old and New," established on precisely this plan, of carrying our liberal views far and wide, by reason of its breadth and its freedom from denominational limitations, still exists, with a reputation which is perhaps as extensive as that of any periodical in our country, and is welcoming to its pages the best of liberal thought and culture. We repeat, that our only *raison d'être* is in our attempting a different plan; and the more we have considered the subject the more we have felt satisfied that this plan deserves to be tried.

II. Perhaps we have carried our notion about leavening other denominations quite far enough, and there may be some use in trying to cultivate and unify and energize our own. We shall consider it no unimportant service if we can help to increase in the Unitarian denomination that sentiment of unity and that interest in itself and its position, which, in any organized body, is an element of life.

III. But we are willing to confess that this purpose of service within our own denomination is not our main desire, and we most justify to ourselves the choice of name precisely on the ground that we wish to reach and influence so far as possible the general current of thought and life of our time. And our argument is this: that what we may lose in diffusiveness we gain in concentration. It is doubtless much for the summer's growth that the atmosphere shall be suffused with moisture, which the leaves inhale and which sparkles every morning in refreshing dew-drops on the exulting plant: but it is also good that the moisture shall sometimes gather in a rain-cloud and break upon the earth in a hearty shower. And so, glad as we are that our Unitarian writers are permitted to swell that general liberalizing influence which, in all kinds of literature, is doing so much to soften and invigorate the thought and practice of our age, we venture to suggest that they would have an added power if they could sometimes bring their force together. The able papers now contributed by these writers to orthodox or secular journals do much to keep open the doors of Christian fellowship, and we would not have them withdrawn — but, as to influence, they exert only what, individually, their intrinsic excellence commands. Whereas, if some of them were collected, as we propose, under the distinctively Unitarian name, they have, besides, the force which comes from their being the opinion of a *body of Christian thinkers*, who, together with the yet larger body of sympathizers whom they represent, have valued these religious opinions enough to be willing, on account of them, to separate themselves from the established churches, and to organize for worship and for associated activities.

“But,” it is urged again, “there is a prejudice against the Unitarian name which will prevent these pages from being read at all by the class of persons whom we most wish to reach.”



Our first impulse always is, when we hear friends speak of this "prejudice," to suggest that they try to do such prejudice away, by connecting with the name "Unitarian" the best fruits of their own thought and life which are really due to its principles, and thus to win for it a respect. But, in point of fact, we think this objection is to a great extent unfounded. It is true that there may still be persons, who hold the sentiments which prevailed so largely half a century ago, when the word "Unitarian" gave a shock to the pious in some religious communions, and would have debarred our books from their tables and ourselves from their fellowship; but this class of persons may safely enough be left to the mollifying influences of the time, and to the generous teaching of their own denominational journals, so many of which are nobly rooting out the spirit of intolerance and preparing the way for a true and large Christian fellowship. And, on the other hand, we have reason to know that there are great numbers of inquiring men and women, in the so-called evangelical ranks, who are not only willing to read these writings, but are eagerly asking for information as to the result of Unitarian thought upon the pressing questions pertaining to theology and philosophy and religious faith. They know perfectly well that to read our publications does not commit them to our opinions. They would ridicule the idea, either that they would be in danger of being contaminated by our heresies, or of being subject to censorship by their brethren for reading them. Thinking people nowadays dare to read, and will read, anything that can help them; and, provided our contributions are valuable, the best portion of other denominations will thank us for bringing them conveniently together, into something like a representative review, — instead of our asking that they will take the pains to hunt them up in the great field of the world's literature where they are scattered now. Perhaps this consideration has impressed itself upon us more strongly from the fact that, during a visit in Europe, with some opportunity of meeting persons of different views, who were interested in the progress of religious thought, we were often asked where they should look for the best information in regard to the current sentiments and character of the church to which Dr. Channing belonged.

There is, however, one objection urged against our assumption of this name, with the spirit of which we so completely sympathize that we cannot omit to consider it. The objection is, that, by thus putting at our front the name of a sect, we help to check the progress towards that grand Christian unity in which denominational lines shall disappear. One of those whose counsel we most value has written to us that he fears this name will disappoint those among us who have heretofore been glad to have the Religious Magazine "look to a broader, freer, and more catholic fellowship among Christians than any one denomination can have."

If the adoption of our denominational name were going to change this generous attitude and this catholicity of spirit, we should be the last to wish to assume it. We believe, however, that this catholic spirit is the natural and inevitable result of the principles of Unitarianism, and that we are fostering it best when we do our best to make Unitarianism prevail.

There are, of course, individuals in other churches as generous and broad as any in our own, but there is certainly no Christian body whose professed principles so directly encourage such a spirit. Unitarianism recognizes, as no other organized sect of Christendom does, that Truth has many sides, and that, in all the seemingly conflicting systems, there are elements that cannot be spared, and thus it teaches us to respect the honest convictions of those whose belief differs from our own. It also recognizes the superiority of the heart and will, above the intellect, in religious culture; and it accepts the Christian life as a truer test of fellowship than intellectual consent. May we not also add, that the differences among enlightened Christians of the present day are largely in regard to dogmas which are embodied in ancient creeds, and that Unitarianism has this advantage over others, in favoring the approach towards unity, — that it has no such creeds?

We fear that the large and generous spirit, so conspicuously shown by many of our denomination, and which we also seek to share, has sometimes lost much of its wholesome effect because it has led them to oppose denominational action and increase. And this has been the result, partly, because it has weakened the spirit of associated action, — which is the great secret of efficiency, — and partly, because, with those whom we most seek to win, the gener-

osity has been in a measure despoiled of its value through a mistake as to its motive. They, however unjustly, have interpreted this catholic disposition towards other sects into indifference to our own. They tell of a country, somewhere in the East, where ecclesiastical politeness is carried so far, that, when two persons of different faith meet, one says to the other, "Tell me to what sublime religion you belong, that, when we are together, I may call myself by it; my own contemptible creed is, so and so." We do not wish, by this, to caricature a sentiment of broad toleration with which we so sincerely sympathize, but only to suggest that a generous attitude towards other forms of faith is worth the more when it is coupled with earnest love for one's own independent convictions.

The recent meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in New York, which, with all its shortcomings, was one of the grandest ecclesiastical events of the year, found its best significance in the circumstances that so many different sects, each adhering to its own separate organization and form of worship and belief, had nevertheless come to recognize a common bond to unite them that was far more essential than the differences that divide — and thus were ready to own each other as parts of the Christian church, and to consult and labor together for God and man.

Rev. Dr. R. D. Hitchcock expressed this sentiment well, in his address before the Alliance, when he said, —

"Each sect has its own errand. The doctrines are not yet settled. We have, strictly speaking, no œcumenical creed, not even the apostles' creed, for each one of us interprets it for himself, making it mean more or less. Controversy must still go on; but we are very foolish to have it do so bitter. Communion is one thing; intercommunion is another thing; just as national law is one thing, international law another. Into the family of nations the door is wide, admitting some nations that none of us would like to belong to. But anything that governs at all is better than anarchy. In Palestine beyond the Jordan, among wild Bedouin men, Turkish troops are welcome to the traveller. So, in the church, Coptic Christianity in Egypt may be far enough beneath our idea, but after all the cross is over them and not the crescent. For myself, of course I *prefer* my own communion, or I would



leave it for another. But God forgive me if I ever looked or shall ever look into any Christian face without finding in it something of the old family look."

Perhaps, after all, the Unity of the Christian Church, for which we long, may not involve the merging of Christian sects, but only the filling them all with a spirit of harmony while each performs its separate mission — a unity like that of the "body, with many members," every one of which, when properly adjusted, ministers to the welfare of the whole. We are glad to believe that one of the peculiar functions of the "Unitarian" member is, to cultivate a largeness of sympathy; and we hope, at any rate, in the conduct of this Review, to make it appear that we labor for the efficiency of our own denomination, with no narrow sectarianism, and that we shall never exalt the interests of the denomination above the interests of the Truth.

Again, we have been urged, in case we adopt the title "Unitarian," to use also the word "Christian," in a second title. In rejecting this counsel, we wish to explain that it is certainly not because we fail to accept this word as larger and better than Unitarian, but because it is necessarily implied, and needs not to be repeated. "Unitarian" means "Unitarian *Christian*," as much as "Baptist," means "Baptist *Christian*," or "Orthodox," "Orthodox *Christian*," or "Protestant," "Protestant *Christian*." To be sure, there was a dispute, some years ago, in connection with a bequest to one of our large institutions, by the terms of which the money was to be applied to the support of "*Protestant Teaching*," and some claimed that an atheist was a Protestant, and that "atheistic teaching" ought to be maintained. But the courts decided that law as well as common opinion assumed the word "Christian" as part of the word "Protestant," fixed there by the authority of three centuries of use. Certainly the word "Protestant" itself has not been more distinctly identified with "Christian," than has the word "Unitarian," by all the acts and declarations of the denomination as well as by the tacit assumptions of its members. Sometimes, because "blood is thicker than water," our feelings of personal attachment for those whom we hold in close regard has made us all glad, if possible, to avoid any exaction of our conditions of fellowship on those who can no longer call themselves

by the Christian name, and this has perhaps given an appearance of looseness. But it will be noticed, that, after the point has been actually raised, even those who argue against the need of withdrawal, do so only on the ground that the persons named have not abandoned Christianity, but only some notions of Christianity which they have feared were inevitably implied in the name. Therefore we have felt no necessity for further proclaiming, by our title, our Christian status, and, out of a regard for the past history of this journal, we have taken for our second title, "Religious Magazine."

There is yet another point to which we will briefly refer. It is objected "that, after all, the word 'Unitarian' does not adequately express the position of our denomination and the precise attitude it assumes in reference to religious thought." In reply we would ask if ever a name does completely describe the thing it is chosen to represent? Is "Protestantism" the best name to designate the movement for which it stands? The word "Protestant," by itself, is suggestive chiefly of antagonism, of negation, of conflict; whereas it has its affirmations, its reverent attachment, its repose in well-established convictions, as much as Catholicism with which it is contrasted. A name often originates, as in this case, in some historical incident, more or less essentially connected with the object named, and sometimes very imperfectly describes it. And indeed, the principle of "*lucus a non lucendo*" is as often to be observed in nomenclature as is that of perfect adaptation. So that we instinctively come to disregard etymology, and allow a name to represent for us that with which it has become associated, as this object may, in other ways, have been made to shape itself in our minds.

The word "Unitarian" has attached itself, we need not inquire how, to a distinct and well-established system of Christian faith, which has its organized activities, and its well-recognized place among the religious systems of Christendom. We cannot wipe it out, if we would, from the history of religious progress; and, while we would willingly consent to abandon it and the organization which it denotes whenever this shall be desirable, either for a better progress towards truth, or for the sake of the greater unity of the Christian world, yet, meantime, while there appears to be

still a need for the service of this denomination as a member of the Christian body, with a distinct work of its own, we rejoice in a name, which however confusing it may be if we consult only a dictionary for its meaning, has clearly enough defined itself in the intellectual and social and religious struggles of the last half century, and has gathered about itself memories and associations of which we have such reason to be glad.

We will only add that this journal will have no official authority of any kind, and that it is entirely independent of any organization — and we repeat that we shall rejoice in feeling that we are working in co-operation with all, who, under whatever name, are helping to advance the cause of Truth and to promote the interests of Christian faith.

CHARLES LOWE.

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### "THE TWO GREAT PROBLEMS OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY."

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A SHORT article, with the above heading, appeared in the last number of the Religious Magazine, and read so much like a wail from a sad heart that we have been prompted to write a reply.

In the opening paragraph the writer says, "We believe that Unitarian Christianity is a universal gospel; that it is for the masses as well as for the cultured few, capable of stirring men to greater action, and giving them a more ample religious growth than previous forms of Christian truth. But, before it can become the supreme gospel of the race, two problems must be solved." Before considering those two problems, I would like to say a word on this opening paragraph.

That "Unitarian Christianity is a universal gospel, intended for the masses as well as for the cultured few," I devoutly believe; understanding by Unitarian Christianity, simply the Christianity of Christ. That is, so far forth as Christianity can be put into words, into propositions, into philosophical statements. But are we not in some danger of forgetting, that the vital part of Chris-